

# الصِّرَاطُ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ



## The Straight Path

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*by*

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وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۚ

WA LA-DhIKRU-LLĀHI AKBAR

and the remembrance of Allāh is the greatest!  
(Sūrah al-Aʿnabūt 29:45)



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

°ihdina-ş-şirāṭa-l-mustaqīm

şirāṭa-l-ladḥina °an°amta °alayhim

ghayri-l-magḥḍūbi °alayhim wa la-ḍ-ḍāāllīn

“Guide us [to] the way [that is] straight.

The way of those whom You have blessed  
not [the way of] those on whom is [Your] anger,  
nor those who are astray. “

(Sūrah al-Fātiḥah 1:6-7)



Thousands of millions of praying Muslims repeat these last two °āyāt of the Fātiḥah at least seventeen times daily and many more millions if not a billion or more repeat it many times over asking for the blessings of Allāh ﷻ on the food they eat to their many supplications (*du°ā°*) for their daily needs and requests.

Yet when we look clearly and dispassionately and objectively at the situation(s) of the Muslims the whole world over we find that a great many Muslims are suffering from exactly that from which they would appear to be asking Allāh ﷻ for relief from which is His anger and from being led astray.

When we look at places like Palestine, Chechnya, East Turkmenistan, the Phillipines, Kashmir, Pakistan, Afghansistan, Iraq, Darfur, Somalia, the Yemen and other ‘hot spots’ we find that these countries or regions which hasve predominately Muslim populations are experiencing wrath daily in the form of being bombed, having their houses torn down around them, their wells poisoned or water stolen, their fruit trees uprooted, their animals poisoned, their young people living without hope of meaningful work or, indeed, any job or work, their women and old people humiliated by abusive arrogant youths with guns and generally are living under the conditions of outright war and/or occupation,

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Further when we look from one end of the Muslim world to the other from, say, Senegal to Indonesia, we find in almost every case, if not in every case, corrupt, abusive and oppressive rulers and regimes headed, nominally by those who call themselves ‘Muslim’ and who are televised for public consumption sitting in the first row of prayer with their compliant ‘ulema and fuqaha at the time of the ‘Eid prayers but are clearly and obviously far astray from what is to be found in the Words of Allah ﷻ in the Qur’ān or what was taught or demonstrated in the *sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ.

This is the condition of the Muslims today all over the world so we have to ask what does it really mean when they petition Allāh ﷻ to “Guide us [to] the way [that is] straight. The way of those whom You have blessed not [the way of] those on whom is [Your] anger, nor those who are astray. “

We must ask, “how did and does this happen?” when Allāh ﷻ says,

أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ

‘aṭī‘u-llāha wa-r-rasūl

obey Allāh and the Messenger

(Sūrah ‘Āl ‘Imran 3:32)

And indeed we see the Muslims, for instance, standing for prayer all in straight rows even filling the *masājid* from time to time (though definitely not at the time of Fajr) — oh yes — the bodies are obedient but what of the hearts — what of the minds — what of the souls of Muslims. Are they obedient or only, and even then only a fraction, is it just that the bodies are obedient whilst their hearts and minds and souls are far from obedience at any level?

In a recent book, “*The Crisis of Islamic Civilization*” by Ali A. Allawi writes the following in describing the “Muslim” world of Iraq in which he grew up but it could easily have been Egypt or the sub-Continent or Turkey or other modern Muslim country

“Islam was not a noticeable factor in daily life. religion was a mandatory course in school, it is true, but the life around us was clearly decoupling from Islam. Nobody taught us the rules of prayer

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or expected us to fast in Ramadan. We learned the shorter verses of the Quran, but the holy book itself was kept on the shelves or in drawers, mostly unread. The pilgrimage to Mecca was only for the old, atoning for the transgressions in their lives. in preperation for their inevitable end – more in the nature of an insurance policy, than an act of piety. I don't ever recall coming accross the word *jihad* in any contemporary context. The prevailing rhetoric was more to do with arab destiny and anti-imperialism. A bit of religious fervour popped up during the Suez Crisis of 1956 when Cairo Radio blared out martial songs calling for divine support against the Anglo-French-Israeli invasion, but that was about it. Women, not only in my own family, wore only western clothes. They had long ceased to wear the *hijab*. The only connection of a pre-modern past that I had was my grandfather, who wore the distinguishing – and dignified– dress of robes and turban of the old-line merchant.

“Apart from religious holidays, the public rituals of Islam were not widely observed. Friday congregational prayers were held, but certainly not with the same degree of participation of vigour that a person would notice nowadays. the formerly ubiquitous Sufi orders had lost most of their devotees, and what was left of them had become the object of faint ridicule by the knowing elite. I came accross possibly one of the last of the wandering derwishes of the area—a *qalandar* – who showed up in front of our house in his patched frocks carrying a ritual pike and a bowl. He was fed and sent on his way. The Shia rites of *Muharram* were celebrated, often wildly, but we were advised to stay well away from them. The were somewhat unbecoming for refined folk, who preferred to hold semi-literary soirées to rememberr the passion of the martyr Imam Husein. Tears were ritually shed and after a short catharsis, normal conversation returned. Modernity was flooding in everywhere and people seemed to want more of it. Cinemas and snack bars, cabarets and country clubs, freely flowing alcohol and mixed parties; Bagdad was turning into Babylon, its hedonistic predecessor or yore. And it not much diffent, as memoirs of the times amply testify, in Casablanca, Cairo, Damascus, Istandbul, Tehran, Karachi and Jakarta.”

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“Secularism had the Muslim world by the throat. It may not have been in the fame that I experienced, but the result was the same. Islam was ignored, marginalized or rejected by the modernising classes. It continued to provide some form of ethical scaffolding to people’s lives but even that became frayed as people moved into a modern and urban environment.”

Some of you who are listening or reading this may say — “Yes that is an accurate picture of our parents time but not of the present.”

I suggest you see a movie called “My Beautiful Laundrette ” written by Hanif Kureishi and produced in the mid 80’s in the UK to see a later rendition, in a far different, context of how modern Muslims or, at least people of a Muslim background, live and live out their lives as immigrants in the domains of the former colonial master or also his later film, “My Son the Fanatic” which tells the story of Parvez, a Pakistani-born taxi driver and a tolerant, secular Muslim and how his life takes an unexpected dark turn when his son Farid converts to radical Islam, leading to family breakdown and social conflict.

Which brings us to the present and all the excesses of the so-called religious students (*ṭaliban*) who finance their version of jihad by selling heroin to ‘the kuffār’ because “they deserve it”; who blow themselves up in *masājid* of different sects who can also somehow through the magic of *takfīr* be turned into “kafirs” and can be randomly killed in the name of Allāh just as in the 1920’s the Wahhabis attacked Makkah and Madina and killed the Muslims of those Holy Places also in the Name of Allāh ﷺ again by the magic of *takfīr* which is how you can turn Muslims into kafirs.

Recently I heard a story of how some of these so-called religious students (*ṭaliban*) attacked a madrassah and killed the Qur’ān teacher, (who had fought the Russians in Afghanistan) in front of his students for the offense that his pants were not above his ankle.

Or another story about a young Taliban commander whose assignment on the behalf of the Jihad was to protect drug convoys on the way to sell drugs in Iran. Really? What kind of Jihad is this?

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Not to mention those who throw acid in the faces of young girls on their way to school because girls should not be educated in spite of °A'isha ؓ being recommended by the Prophet ﷺ as a person from whom “you can learn your *dīn*.” If she was that, and ﷺ he never lied, then ask yourself who taught her? And if the Prophet ﷺ taught his own wife ؓ then how could it possibly be wrong to teach young girls and that is definitely who she was – at least in her beginnings.

So, while we support the noble aims of holding a conference for the purpose of understanding what is meant by “Guide us to the Way that is Straight” we must ask, if we are honest, where, who and how.

Where are the people on the Straight Way?

Who are the people on the Straight Way?

And how can it be said that they are on the straight Way?

– or even –

In today's world what is the Straight Way and how can we know it?



After a recent conference on the Shuhadā°-e-Karbalā° I have been thinking more about the lessons of Kārbalā° and the outcome of that battle and especially the words of Yazīd when he received the head of al-Ḥusayn ؓ in Damascus and after smacking it across the mouth said, “Were not these the lips that were kissed by Muḥammad. The same lips, which are now smeared with mud. How delighted my ancestors must be. How happy, their souls, must be today, to see that I have avenged them, for all their defeats. In truth there was no revelation. It was all just a plot of Banu Hashīm.”

My remarks here should not be construed as fuel in the realm of the polemics between Sunni and Shi'a but between good and evil as Husayn ؓ gave his head but refused to give his hand to Yazīd, and here I want you to think deeply on the meaning of “Guide us [to] the way [that is] straight. The way of those whom You have blessed not [the way of] those on whom is [Your] wrath, nor those who are astray.” and ask yourselves deeply why we see wrath (*ghadab*) and misguidance (*dalāl*) so widespread on and in our community.

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ  
إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ نَبْرَأَهَا ۚ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ

mā ʾaṣāba min musībatin fi-l-ʾarḍi wa lā fī ʾanfusikum  
ʾilla fī kitābin min qabāli nabraʾahā;  
ʾinna dhalika ʿala-llāhi yāsīr

“No calamity falls upon the earth or within yourselves,  
but that it is [written] in a Book, before We shape it from naught.  
Truly that is easy for Allāh.”  
(Sūrah al-Ḥadīd 57:22)

We know that the death of al-Ḥusayn ؑ was foretold by the Prophet ﷺ and we know the the place of Karbalāʾ was foretold so that is not the issue that I am addressing here as is clear from the above ʾāyah. With Allāh ﷻ there are no mistakes.

That this was known is on the authority of ʿAnās ibn Harīth ؓ who narrated, “One day the Holy Prophet ﷺ ascended the pulpit to deliver a sermon to his companions while his two grandsons, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn ؑ were sitting before him. When his address was over, he put his hand on al-Ḥusayn ؑ and raising his head towards Heaven, said: ‘O my Lord! I am Muḥammad, Your slave and Your Prophet, and these two are the distinguished and pious members of my family who will fortify my cause after me. O my Lord! Gabriel has informed me that my son al-Ḥusayn ؑ will be killed. O my Lord! bless my cause in recompense for al-Ḥusayn’s ؑ martyrdom, make him the leader of the martyrs, be You oh Allāh his helper and guardian and do not bless his murderers.’”

All what had to happen happened and there is nothing to be said about that other than what Allāh ﷻ says in the ʾāyāt above.

What I am addressing is how Yazīd in his own ambition, his father’s ambitions, tore apart the Islamic system of democracy and consultation and replaced it with one characterized by dictatorship and state terrorism which left no space, then or now, available for tolerance, peace, freedom of expression and difference of opinion.



And what I say, again with out wishing to add fuel to the fire of Sunni and Shī'ah polemics, that this same system is demonstrably the system that is in place throughout the majority of the Muslim world today — both Sunni and Shī'ah — regardless of what statements or symbols are displayed on the flags of various countries.

And further what I am hoping to make clear is how the ongoing continuation of these systems of governance is precisely the reason we, as Muslims, are living under the wrath of Allāh ﷻ and are everywhere subject to misguidance (*ḍalāl*) of one form and another no matter that we pray over and over again to be led to the straight path. Until we, as a worldwide Muslim community, elect to make the same decision that al-Husayn ؑ did we will continue as we are.

And if you ask me to elucidate what that decision is I will say that until we take our hand out of the hand of Yazīd and place our hand in the hand of al-Husayn ؑ our situation will remain the same.



Here we have to ask ourselves what does it mean to put our hand in the hand of al-Husayn ؑ and how, functionally, can we remove our collective hand from that of Yazīd and his inheritors.



The Prophet ﷺ said, “The scholars of knowledge are the inheritors of the Prophets.” [narrated by Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, Nasa'i, Ibn Maja, Ahmad, Ibn Hibban, and others]

When Fudayl ibn ʿIyad ؑ heard this hadith, he commented, “The people of spiritual wisdom (*ḥukamā*) are the inheritors of the prophets” ؑ [Ibn Nuʿaym, *Hilyat al-Awliya*, 8.92]

ʿImām al-ʿAynī ؒ explained in his commentary on Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *ʿUmdat al-Qarī* (2.39) that this ḥadīth is inspired by the words of Allāh ﷻ, “Then [We gave] the Book as an inheritance to those whom We chose of Our worshippers...”

ثُمَّ أَوْرَثْنَا الْكِتَابَ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا

thumma ʿowrathna-l-kitāba-l-ladhīna-ṣ-ṭafaynā min ʿibādīnā  
(Sūrah al-Fāṭir 35:32)

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The knowledge possessed by these scholars is the knowledge deemed beneficial by Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, was defined by Imam Ghazali as being,

“Knowledge of the way to Allāh ﷻ and the final life.”

By knowledge we do not mean information (nor by education do we mean vocational training that passes for education) but rather the way of transforming oneself outwardly and inwardly, in order to become true slaves of Allah ﷻ, on the path of His Messenger ﷺ.

This is the “deep understanding in *dīn*” that the Messenger ﷺ praised when he said, Whoever Allāh ﷻ wishes well for He gives him deep understanding in *dīn*. [Bukhārī and Muslim]

This deep understanding is defined by ʿImām Abu Hanifa ؒ when he says, “It is to know one’s self: what is for it and what is against it.” As such it encompasses all three dimensions of the *dīn*: actions (ʿ*islām*), beliefs (ʿ*imān*) and spiritual excellence (ʿ*ihsān*) the apex of which is knowledge and love of Allāh ﷻ, for Allāh ﷻ said, And those who believe are overflowing in their love of Allah.”.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ

wa-l-ladhīna ʿamanū ʿashaddu ḥubbā li-llāh

(Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:165)

It is in the hands of such people that we must put our hands and take our hands out of the hands of those who love only the world and seek power and domination over others rather than their own selves.

To be a knower means the master must have the knowledge of the conditions of the state of excellence, as mentioned by the Prophet

To be a knower means the master must have the knowledge of the conditions of the state of excellence, as mentioned by the Prophet ﷺ in the Ḥadīth of Jibrīl ؑ, “Worship Allāh as if you see Him, knowing if you do not see Him yet He sees you.” Such a knower (ʿ*arif bi-llāh*) must bear witness in his heart that Allāh ﷻ is the Unique One in His Essence, in His Attributes, and in His Actions. He must know about His Attributes through vision and taste and by experiencing self-effacement in the Divine Presence Itself.

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So often we read about those who, in the past, travelled many hundreds of miles on foot or by donkey or horse or camel or ship seeking a single ḥadīth. In our time we need only consult Mufti Google to find these same ḥadīth complete with their *sanad* and *matn* and even commentaries without understanding that the cognate or the parrallel of that search in our time is the search from the *mutaqqi ʿalīm* – the scholar (ʿalim) who possesses taqwa or the knower (ʿarif bi-llāh) who possesses experience who are seldom to be found, if at all, having ʿiftar in the White House or dining with the Minister of Internal Security in Riyadh etc. Such people are often the problem rather than the solution even though they may claim to be advancing the cause of ʿIslām in the corridors of power.

There is a saying in Arabic, “*Siyasi Najasi*” = “Politics are Fitlh”.

Allāh ﷻ says,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ

yā ʾayyuha-l-ladḥina ʾamanū-t-ta-qu-llaha  
wa kūnū maʿa-ṣ-ṣādiqīn

Oh you who believe remain conscious of Allāh  
and be with the Truthful (*aṣ-ṣādiqīn*).

(Sūrah at-Tawbah 9:119)

and regardless of your thoughts on the subject most of you who are listening or reading these words will have to agree that those in the corridors of power are seldom known for their truthfulness.

But not to digress again into the subject of the politics of the subject, even though those politics play a decisive part in keeping Muslims living under the wrath of Allāh ﷻ and general misguidance let us continue along the lines of understanding the subject of the Straight Path.

Perhaps one of the most interesting things we should consider in the *duʿā* that is the *Fātiḥah* is that we are asking is Allāh ﷻ to “guide us to the straight path” which is not a destination but rather a way to a destination. Not some fixed place but rather a process — a process that results in the blessing or the *niʿamah* of Allāh ﷻ.

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In the *tafsīr* of Ibn Kathīr, we find the following ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ:

“Allāh has set an example: a straight path that is surrounded by two walls, one on each side, with several open doors within the walls covered with curtains. There is a caller on the gate of the path who calls out, ‘O people! Stay on the path and do not deviate from it.’ Meanwhile, a caller from above the path is also warning any person who wants to open any one of these doors, ‘Woe unto you! Do not open it, for if you open it you will pass through.’ The straight path is ʾIslām, the two walls are the set limits of Allāh, and the doors represent what Allāh ﷻ has prohibited. The caller at the gate to the path is the Book of Allāh [Qurʾān], while the caller above the path is the admonishment of Allāh ﷻ in the heart of every Muslim.”

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ فَعَلُوا مَا يُوعَظُونَ بِهِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ وَأَشَدَّ تَثْبِيثًا  
وَإِذَا لَا تَأْتِيَنَاهُمْ مِنْ لَدُنَّا أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا  
وَلَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا

wa low<sup>o</sup>annahum fa<sup>o</sup>alū

mā yū<sup>o</sup>aḍḥūna-bihi lakāna khayrāl-lahum wa <sup>o</sup>ashadda taqābīt.

wa <sup>o</sup>idhāl-lāa ataynahum mil-ladunnāa <sup>o</sup>ajāran <sup>o</sup>aḍḥīmā.

wa lahadaynāhum ṣirāṭam-mustaqīmā.

....but if they had done what they were instructed [to do],  
it would have been better for them and far more strengthening  
[for their faith].

and then we would have given them a great reward from Our Presence  
and We would have guided them to a straight path.

(Sūrah an-Nisā<sup>o</sup> 4:66-68)

And all the time this path that we are both seeking and are sought upon is, as we have tried to clarify, a process in itself as well as also a way leading to something. But the necessity here lies in actually taking that path; travelling on that path and at the same time knowing that one is living on that path rather than always thinking that one is going somewhere when, in truth, one is already there.

وَلْيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ  
فَيُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ فَتُخْبِتَ لَهُ قُلُوبُهُمْ ۗ  
وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُدِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

wa li-ya<sup>l</sup>lama-l-ladhīnā <sup>ū</sup>tu-l-<sup>il</sup>ma <sup>inn</sup>hu-l-ḥaqqu mir-rabbika  
fa-yu<sup>min</sup>ū bihi fa-yukh<sup>b</sup>bita lahu qulūbuhum.

wa <sup>inna</sup>-llāha lahādi-l-ladhīna <sup>aman</sup>ū <sup>ila</sup> ṣirāṭim-mustaqīm

And so that those who have been given knowledge will know  
that it is truth from your Lord

and believe in it and their hearts may humbly submit to Him.

And surely Allāh guides those who believe to a straight path.

(Sūrah al-Ḥajj 22:54)

and it is in that part of the <sup>āyāt</sup> where Allāh ﷻ says, “and their hearts may humbly submit” that we find the truth of the way of al-Ḥusayn ؑ in contrast to the way of Yazīd.

That is what is called for from the traveller on the way to Allāh ﷻ: is the humble submission of the heart and that, precisely, is what the people who seek power and domination over the world rather than their own selves (*nufūs*) never can or do understand or grasp.

Who are we in truth but dust beneath the sandals of the Prophet ﷺ and who did he himself think he was other than a traveller sitting underneath a tree in accord with his ﷺ saying,

“I am like a traveller, who takes a rest under a tree in the shade and then goes on his way.” (Tirmidhi).

Where is anger or wrath or misguidance or arrogance in such an understanding? Nowhere to be found.

There is a saying that there are many gates to the Garden but the widest is the lowest and that is the gate of humility through which many may enter but only those who are prepared to lower themselves and submit in all humility. This is the real *ḥikmah* and real *ḥaqiqah* not the high flown and flashy allusions to all that is other.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani ؒ said in his Futuḥu-l-Gḥayb that there are ten virtues to be practiced by those engaged in spiritual struggle and self-examination. If they keep them up and master them by the Grace of Allāh ﷻ they will attain to noble stations.

“The tenth [of these]” he writes “is humility, for it is with this virtue that the servant’s residence is erected, that his station is raised high, that his honor and eminence are made perfect in the sight of Allāh ﷻ and in the sight of His creatures, and that he is empowered to achieve all his worldly and otherworldly goals. This virtue is the root, branch and consummation of all virtues, whereby the servant attains to the stations of the righteous; those who are content with Allāh ﷻ in joy and sorrow alike. This is the perfection of piety.

“Humility means that the servant never meets anyone without assuming him to be more worthy than himself. He will always say: ‘Perhaps he is better than I in the sight of Allāh ﷻ and higher in degree.’ If it is someone young, he will say: ‘This person has not offended Allāh ﷻ as I have done, so he is undoubtedly better than I.’ If it is someone older, he will say: ‘This person served Allāh ﷻ long before I did.’ If it is someone learned, he will say: “This person has received something I have not experienced, and has acquired something I have not acquired. He knows things of which I am ignorant, and he puts his knowledge into practice.’ If it is someone who is ignorant, he will say: ‘This person has offended Allāh ﷻ in ignorance, while I have offended Him knowingly. I do not know what end He has in store for me, nor what end He has in store for him.’ If it should be an unbeliever, he will say: ‘I don’t know; perhaps he will embrace ʾIslām and come to a good end, and maybe I shall become an unbeliever and come to a bad end.’

“When the servant is like this, Allāh ﷻ keeps him safe from disasters, and brings him as a reward to the stations of loyalty to Allāh ﷻ. He belongs among the chosen ones and friends of the All-Merciful, and among the enemies of Iblis – the cursed by Allāh ﷻ.

“This is the gate of mercy, by the attainment of which the gate of pride is demolished and the cords of vanity are cut, and the stage of self-aggrandizement in religious and worldly matters is left behind.”

وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ ۖ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ  
بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُم بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

wa ʾanna hadhā širāṭī mustaqīman fa-t-tabiʿūh;  
wa lā tattbiʿū-s-subula fa-tafarraqa bi-kum ʿan sabīlih:  
dhalikum wa-ṣ-ṣākum-bihi laʿallakum tattaqūn

And this is My Straight Path so follow it,  
and do not follow other ways

lest they cause you to deviate from His Way:

this He has enjoined upon you so you might be conscious [of Him].  
(Sūrah al-ʾAnʿām 6:153)



So when we talk and write about the two parallel paths through this world; the way of the Prophet ﷺ which was exemplified by his grandson al-Ḥusayn ؑ in contrast to the way of Yazīd — this is the *Straight Path* of al-Ḥusayn ؑ to which we refer.

The Prophet ﷺ in a sense had no choice. He was the Prophet of Allāh ﷻ and as such his way was laid down before him ﷺ “before Adam was between clay and water”. On the level of Destiny or the *Qadr* of Allāh ﷻ, we can say that neither al-Ḥusayn ؑ or Yazīd ultimately had a choice but in another sense they both had certain choices which are distinctly related to the choices that each and every one of us as individuals face in this world.

وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ ۚ إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا

wa qul jāʾa-l-ḥaqqu wa zahaqa-l-bāṭil • ʾinna-l-bāṭila kāna zahuqā

And say the Truth has come and falsehood has vanished  
Surely falsehood is for ever bound to vanish

(Sūrah al-ʾIsrāʾ 17:81)

And this is the question that is before Muslims both then and now.

Which way will you take? In whose hand is *your* hand? In the hand of the one who follows the way of Allāh ﷻ and His Prophet ﷺ or in the hand of the one who seizes power by force and deception.

## The Straight Path

Is your hand in the hand of the people who live by corruption and bribery, by theft and thuggery, by rape and war, of bloodshed, indiscriminate killing, extra-judicial murder, oppression and cruelty?

The Prophet ﷺ said, “A man is on the way of his friend.” “You *are* the company you keep.” “Man is influenced by the faith of his friends. Therefore, be careful with whom you associate.”

In most of the ways (*turūq*) of the *ṣuffiyya karām* ﷺ and, indeed, among the Muslims in general, there is a nightly practice of the examination of self (*al-insan laẓim ʿalā ḥasib ʿala nafsah*).

In this practice we examine our self (*nafs*) and our selves on a daily basis and each of us seek to account for both our daily activities and our activities on a larger and broader scale in the light of the Orders of Allāh ﷻ and the Way of His Prophet ﷺ.

اقْرَأْ كِتَابَكَ كَفَىٰ بِنَفْسِكَ الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكَ حَسِيبًا

ʿiqrāʾ kitābika kafaya bi-nafsika-l-yowma ʿalayka ḥasīnā

Read your book!

Sufficient is your own self this day as a reckoner against you.

(Sūrah al-ʿIsrāʾ 17:14)

From our own perspective it seems a great loss, and also indicative of the co-option of rule over the larger ʿ*ummah* on the part of the Yazidites, that the principle of justice (عدل) has been downplayed in the articles of belief (عقيدة) in the way of *ahlu-s-sunnah wa jamʿah*.

The loss or downplaying of this principle of justice (عدل) it seems has played no small part in the present situation we face as Muslims. Yes, we talk about the straight Path and every time we read *al-Fātiḥah* we constantly beseech Allāh ﷻ to “Guide us to the Straight Path” but what we see everywhere we look from one end of the Muslim world to the other is that almost nowhere is the Straight Path followed in its fullness and, most especially, in regard to the important principle of justice.

As someone who has lived at length in many countries having a majority Muslim population it has been my observation that everywhere the forces of oppression (*dhulm*) have the upper hand.



Indeed it is this very observation living on the ground and among the people under many forms of governments in majority Muslim countries which has brought me over the years to take the view of the tyranny of the Yazidites. Justice creates peace and harmony between people and also serves as a prerequisite for *akḥlāq* and *ʿadab* in the public forum which is to say true politeness between people on all levels of civil life and governance and general good manners.

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ  
الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ

laqadā ʿarsalnā rusulanā bi-l-bayyināti wa ʿanzalnā maʿahumu-l-  
kitāba wa-l-mīzāna li-yaqūma-n-nāsu bi-l-qisṭā

Surely We sent Our Messengers with Clear Proofs  
and We sent down with them the Book and the Balance  
so that people might uphold justice.

(Sūrah al-Ḥadīd 57:25)

In the example of the Prophet ﷺ, we find a prime example of this principle of *ʿadl*. In a ḥadīth narrated by Abu Saïd al-Khudri ؓ: “While we were with the Messenger ﷺ who was distributing [some property], there came Dhu-l-Khuwaisira, a man from the tribe of Bani Tamīm who said, “Oh Messenger of Allāh be Just! The Prophet ﷺ said, “Woe to you! Who could do justice if I did not? I would be a desperate loser if I did not do justice...” (Muslim).

In another instance regarding the Prophet ﷺ a woman belonging to a prestigious family was arrested for theft. The case was brought to the Prophet ﷺ, and it was recommended that she might be spared the punishment for theft. The Prophet ﷺ replied: “The nations that lived before you were destroyed by Allāh ﷻ because they punished the common man for their offenses and let their dignitaries go unpunished for their crimes; I swear by Him Who holds my life in His hand that even if my daughter Fatimah ؓ had committed this crime, I would have cut off her hand.”

In our times it is known that you get as much justice as you can afford, as justice is based on money rather than principal and ethics.

## The Straight Path

Pay close attention in the story to his ﷺ saying, “The nations that lived before you were destroyed by Allāh ﷻ because they punished the common man for their offenses and let their dignitaries go unpunished for their crimes.” and look around wherever you live be it in a Muslim majority country or in the a non-Muslim country and ask yourself really where do we find justice practiced on the behalf of all the people all the time?

You will not find one country in the world where this is the case.

Indeed cynicism right across the world spectrum is such that even suggesting that one can find justice and fairness anywhere is taken as a joke – a kind of Pollyanna wishful thinking.

So when I say, and indeed insist, upon my understanding that we Muslims (never mind the others as they have their problems which are also, in a sense, ours due to their military and economic dominance) have been overtaken by the Yazidites I believe, if you look at what is around you and everywhere in your face with an open mind, you will agree with me.

But it is one thing to make social observations and easy to find and point out the problems but where, you are right to ask, is the solution. The picture I paint is without doubt bleak and depressing and moreover I am not only pointing at far away events and occurrences involving governments and so-called social agencies and services but I will also ask you to look more closely at the situation. Look for instance as a Muslim at your local masjid at how it is governed and run. The yearly struggles to gain office – to be the president or the chairman or on the board or – even more tightly contested – to be the treasurer etc. and tell me Yazīd is someone from the past – a phenomena from long ago and far away.

So where, you ask, is the solution?

First of all I don't believe there is any grand solution.

Our ṣhaykh, °Ali Abu-l Ḥasan ash-Shadhḥulī ﷺ, when he was sent out by his ṣhaykh, Sīdī °ibn Mashīsh ﷺ to begin his teaching in the world, asked his ṣhaykh as they were parting for any advice he might be prepared to give.

He said, “You will never go wrong if you remember this and never forget it, ‘Allāh ﷻ is Allāh ﷻ — and people are people.’”

That being said we must also say that knowing that did not stop either the one or the other from continuing their efforts in the Way of Allāh ﷻ and His Prophet ﷺ and it is precisely there where I do both find and suggest *a* solution is to be found. And I say *a* not *the* solution as not everybody is prepared to sell themselves to Allāh ﷻ which is what is called for — here I suggest you read or listen to my talk on the *bay‘ah* for that is the meaning of *bay‘ah* — to sell yourself to Allāh ﷻ and for Allāh ﷻ — to make a life for your self where your living, your breathing, your dying are all for Allāh ﷻ and the Messenger ﷺ or his representative in time who takes your *bay‘ah* — the *shaykh* or *murshid* or *pir* whose hand is in the hand of the one whose hand is in the hand of the Rasūl ﷺ.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ

yā āyyuha-l-ladhīna ‘amanu-t-ta-qu-llaha wa kūnū ma‘a-ṣ-ṣādiqīn

Oh you who believe be conscious [of Allāh]  
and be with those who are true [to their word] (*aṣ-ṣādiqīn*)  
(Sūrah at-Tawba 9:119)

The word of Allāh ﷻ is for all times, every era, every century and land. It is an ongoing order, from which we understand the importance of keeping company with the truthful and the trustworthy. Allāh ﷻ orders all human beings to accompany them, because by keeping their company, one will see how they live their lives, how they deal with people, how they address their companions, how they eat, how they sleep, and how they worship.

By accompanying them, one will learn their good manners (*akḥlaq*) and their ways of life.

Another way to understand this verse is that one should accompany a truthful trustworthy G-d conscious person. To be one is very rare and not many people arrive to that. But anyone, if they put some effort into it, can, ‘*inshāā*’ Allāh, find such a person and accompany him, in order to be guided and to have light upon the way.

The solution I hold forth requires the living presence of a connected ṣaykh. Through his physical and spiritual linkage to the Prophet ﷺ, he establishes that connection with the student. The obligation of the student is to maintain his connection to his ṣaykh and to hold firmly to the hand of the one within his reach.

A word of advice here by way of an aside – if one is separated from one's ṣaykh by death or other circumstances and is not thoroughly cooked, it is necessary to find a living ṣaykh who can complete the work of the first teacher and guide. Attachment to a ṣaykh who is no longer alive is a false hope and can also very well be a manifestation of pride – in itself the sinker of many ships.

And in all this searching for a ṣaykh always remember that a donkey with a load of holy books is still a donkey and keep in mind and heart the saying of Mawlanā Jalalu-d-dīn Rumī رحمه الله who said, “A student who is trained by a man of Allāh ﷺ will have a pure and purified spirit but one who is trained by an imposter and hypocrite and learns from him will be like him: despicable, weak, incapable, morose, without any exit from uncertainties and bad habits, and all together deficient in his senses — this by way of advice.”

So to just sum up this last part — if one wants to get out from under the oppression and control of the Yazīdites one must undertake a search for someone who is directly connected back to the Prophet ﷺ by a clear unbroken line (*silsilah*) of recognized masters who have maintained over the centuries the spiritual and religious teachings of the Prophet ﷺ and, most importantly, are living their daily lives in direct accord with those teachings.

Such a person must have a verifiably written and public authorization (*ʿijāza*) from his own spiritual guide granting him formal permission (*ʿidhn*) to be a spiritual guide in the unbroken chain of transmission (*silsilah*) that goes without a single break back to the Messenger ﷺ.

Concerning this kind of transmission ʿImām Abū Ḥanīfa رحمه الله (81-150 H.) said, “I accompanied ʿImām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq رحمه الله (83-148 H.) for two years during which I acquired the spiritual knowledge that made me a knower in the path of Allāh ﷻ.”

And °Imām ash-Shāf'ī (رحمه الله) (150-205 H.) said “From the Sūfis I received three kinds of knowledge.”

1. They taught me how to speak.
2. They taught me how to treat people with a soft heart.
3. They guided me in the way of Sufism.

°Imām Aḥmad ibn-Hanbal (احمد بن محمد بن حنبل ابو عبد الله الشيباني) (164-241 AH) said “Sufis are like a fountain of knowledge, they recite the remembrance of Allāh (ﷻ) in their hearts. They have the most spiritual power.”

I cite these quotes lest people say that this whole science of *taṣawwuf* and its transmission is somehow a product of extraneous foreign sources such as Greece, Persia or India.

Beyond this I further suggest, and this is most usually a by-product of the teaching, the development of mercy in one's self and in one's life which is the unparralled means by which one may realise the grace and blessings (*ni'amah*) of Allāh (ﷻ) and, in Truth (*ḥaqiqah*) it is the essence and source of the sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ) in accord with the saying of Allāh (ﷻ),

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

wa mā °arsalnāka °illa raḥmata li-l-°ālamīn

And We have not sent you except as a mercy to all the worlds  
(Sūrah al-°Anbiyā° 21:107)

and indeed Allāh (ﷻ) says of His Own Self

كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ

kataba rabbukum °ala nafsihi-r-raḥmah

...your Lord has written Mercy upon Himself  
(Sūrah al-°An°ām 6:54)

I cannot emphasize adequately or enough the absolute necessity of the development of this quality and virtue of Mercy for it is precisely this quality that is totally lacking in the outlook and way of life of the Yazīdities both then and now. The surest way of defeating their program is our taking on the natural duty of Mercy.

## The Straight Path

This natural duty of mercy is enjoined upon human beings through what ʾIbn ʿArabi ﷺ called the “Mercy of Obligation” (*raḥmatu-l-wujūb*), which is an aspect of the Command of Obligation. Unlike the altruistic “Mercy of the Gratuitous Gift” (*raḥmatu-l-ʾimtinān*), which is part of the Creative Command and is an expression of divine love and creativity, the Mercy of Obligation refers to the mercy that is required in every moral action, according to the ʾāyat we have mentioned: “...your Lord has written Mercy upon Himself.” ʾIbn ʿArabi ﷺ further relates the concept of mercy to the divine names *ar-Raḥmān* and *ar-Raḥīm*, with the Mercy of the Gratuitous Gift corresponding to *ar-Raḥmān* and the Mercy of Obligation to *ar-Raḥīm*. Because of the reciprocal nature of justice (ʿ*adl*), any act of mercy bestowed by one human being upon another constitutes a gift for both the receiver and the giver. For the receiver, the gift of mercy compensates for the severity of justice. For the giver, the duty to act mercifully is also a gift from Allāh ﷻ because it counteracts the tendency of the ego to indulge in self-righteousness. As ʾIbn ʿArabi ﷺ writes in *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*,

“Allāh ﷻ exercises mercy as a gratuitous act under the name *ar-Raḥmān* (the Universally Merciful), while he obligates Himself (to requite with mercy) under the name *ar-Raḥīm* (the Singularly Compassionate). Obligation is part of the Gratuitous Gift (*raḥmatu-l-ʾimtinān*), and so *ar-Raḥīm* is contained within *ar-Raḥmān*. “...your Lord has written Mercy upon Himself.” in such a way that mercy of this kind may be extended to His servants in reward for the good acts done by them individually — those good works which are mentioned in the Qurʾān. This kind of mercy is an obligation upon Allāh ﷻ with which He has bound Himself toward those servants, who rightfully merit this kind of mercy by their good works.”

The result of this can best be summed up in the words of another ḥadīth, “If you seek mercy be merciful.”

All of this in turn is bound up in the great Law of Reciprocity which, in essence, stipulates that what you give is what you get.

°Ibn °Arabi ﷺ in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyah* (Makkan Revelations) (IV 62.23) writes, “The divine effusion is vast, because [Allāh ﷻ] is vast in His bestowal. There is no shortcoming on His part. But you have nothing of Him except what your essence accepts from Him. Therefore, your own essence keeps the Vast away from you and places you in the midst of constraint. The measure in which His governance occurs within you is your ‘Lord’ (*rabbukum*). It is the Lord that you serve and the Lord alone that you recognize. This is the mark within which He will transmute Himself to you on the day of resurrection, by unveiling Himself. In this world, this mark remains unseen for most people. Every human being knows it from himself, but he does not know that it is what he knows.”

This is in accord with the sayings of the Prophet ﷺ: “The beginning of all knowledge is knowledge of the self.” and: “He who knows his self knows his Lord.” (*man °arafa nafsa fa-qad °arafa rabbah*)

If then one knows one’s Lord as Mercy then one’s actions and self will all be tinged by this Mercy. This goes back to exactly what we spoke about in the beginning concerning the present situation where we see everywhere the response, or rather lack of response, to the plea that we be spared the wrath of Allāh and mis-guidance and yet we find, in spite of so many times daily asking to be spared this wrath and mis-guidance, that instead we are plunged into it.

This is because for the Yazīdities the lord of their self (*nafs*) is the Lord of Wrath and the Leader Astray for that is who they worship and so, that, in turn according to the earlier mentioned Law of Reciprocity is what they receive and, unfortunately, we as Muslims are suffering from their hands due to their position in our societies.

Again this is why it is so necessary to remove our hands from their hands, which is to say to cease working for and with them and their aims and instead sell our selves (*bay°ah*) to Allāh ﷻ and put our hands with the pure hearted merciful followers of the Merciful and work in this world for peace and justice and mercy. Only if we change our selves can we hope to change the world and we can only do this by disinvesting ourselves from the oppressors and all their works and their programs for dominion and domination over others

## The Straight Path

The real Peace Movement is the exertion of our will and effort in the direction of conforming our will to the Will of Allāh ﷻ and in surrendering our will to that divine Will. Out of that self-surrender (<sup>ʿ</sup>*istislām*) comes peace (*salām*).

This peace (*salām*) rising out of surrender (<sup>ʿ</sup>*istislām*) is what is <sup>ʿ</sup>*islām*. It is through this <sup>ʿ</sup>*islām* that the violence within the appetitive self (*nafsu-l-ammara*) which seeks only it's own aims can be controlled and the beast within us subdued so that we live at peace with our selves and with the world because we are at peace with Allāh ﷻ the Creator, Maintainer and Sustainer of all the worlds.

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا • فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا  
قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا • وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا

wa nafsiñw-wa mā sawwāhā • fa-<sup>ʿ</sup>alhamahā fujūrahā wa taqāwāhā  
qadā <sup>ʿ</sup>afлахā man zakkāhā • wa qadā khāba man dassāhā

By the Soul (*nafs*) and that which shaped it  
and inspired it [both] to lasciviousness and to consciousness.

Successful is the one who purifies it,  
and failed is the one who buries it.

(Sūrah ash-Shams 91:7-10)

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ  
ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً  
فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي • وَادْخُلِي جَنَّاتِي  
yāā <sup>ʿ</sup>ayyatuha-nafsu-l-mutāma<sup>ʿ</sup>innah  
<sup>ʿ</sup>irji<sup>ʿ</sup>īlā rabbiki rāḍiyatam-mardīyyah  
fa-dākhulī fī <sup>ʿ</sup>ibādī • wa-dākhulī jannatī

Oh you whose soul is at peace!

Return to your Lord well pleased, well pleasing.

And enter in [with] My worshippers • and enter My Garden.

(Sūrah al-Fajr 89:27-30)



Ibn ʿUmar رضي الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: “When you pass by the Gardens of Paradise, avail yourselves of them.” The Companions رضي الله عنهم asked: “What are the Gardens of Paradise, O Messenger of Allāh?” He replied: “The circles of dhikr. There are roaming angels of Allāh ﷻ who go about looking for the circles of dhikr, and when they find them they surround them.” (Aḥmad)

Abu Saʿid al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, “When any group remembers Allāh ﷻ, angels surround them and mercy covers them, tranquility (*sakinah*) descends upon them, and Allāh ﷻ mentions them to those who are with Him.” (Narrated by Muslim, Tirmidhi, Ahmad, Ibn Majah, and Bayhaqi)

Know that the perfect Rememberance is the annihilation of one’s self in Allāh ﷻ. When your remembering is like this, Allāh ﷻ will transfer you to that which is the highest standard of *adh-dhikr*, which is a remembering that has no ending.

Now by selling your self (*bayʿah*) to Allāh ﷻ in every word, in whatever you possess, all that you “have” is from Him and returning back to Him. This is His mercy to you, that through you He remembers Himself. He has made you to sit on the carpet of His presence, and His angels are around you. As the Prophet ﷺ, said, “The people sitting remembering Allāh ﷻ will always have the angels around them, and the mercy and *sakinah* will come upon them as a veil of mercy and quietness and purity, and Allāh ﷻ will remember them with the group of angels who are with Him.”

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونَ

fa-dh-kurunī ʿadhkurkum wa-shkurūlī wa lā takfurūn

So remember Me [and] I remember you  
and be thankful and don’t cover up the truth.

(Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:152)

How far we have come from the beginning of this talk in which we were speaking about the terrible suffering that confronts the Muslim world in the present time.

## The Straight Path

What I have sought to make clear in this talk is *a* way out of the suffering and tyranny of the Yazīdi oppressors (*ḍḥalimīn*) who besiege us on every side. It is a way that costs you everything but then, in truth, we all have everything to gain and nothing to lose as freedom *is* just another word for nothing left to lose. Give up and give in to Allāh ﷻ and everything shall be yours. Resist all you like but in the end we shall all come to stand before Allāh ﷻ and He shall, in Truth, judge us all with perfect justice.

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ ۖ  
فَمَنِ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا ۖ  
وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِوَكِيلٍ

qul yā āyūha-n-nāsu qadā jāā'akumu-l-ḥaqqqu mir-rabbikum.  
fami-h-tadā fa-°innamā yahtadī li nafsih. wa mañ ḍalla fa-°inna  
yaḍillu °alayha. wa mā °alaykum bi-wakīl

Say, "Oh you people!

Unquestionably the Truth has come to you from your Lord.  
So whoever is guided, is guided only [for the good of] his Soul (*naḥs*)  
and whoever goes astray [does so] only against [the good] of it.

And I am not a guardian over you.

(Sūrah Yūnus 10:108)

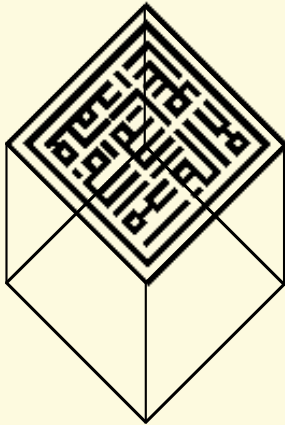
يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ  
وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا ۚ  
وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

yu°ti-l-ḥikmata mañ-yassḥā°u  
wa mañ-yu°ta-l-ḥikmata fa-qadā °ūtiya ḵhayran-kathirā  
wa mā yadhḍḥakkaru °illāā °ulū-l-°abābā

He gives the Wisdom to whomever He wants  
and whoever is given the Wisdom is given an abundance of good.  
And yet no one remembers except those who understand.

(Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:269)





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